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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LUSAKA 000427

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TAGS: [SADC](#) [PREL](#) [ZA](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: SADC SUMMIT CONCLUDES WITH HALF-HEARTED RESULTS

REF: A. LUSAKA 424

[B](#). LUSAKA 423

[C](#). LUSAKA 421

Classified By: DCM Michael Koplovsky for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (C) Summary. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Heads of State Summit concluded with little to show for the leaders' efforts. South African President Thabo Mbeki seems to have prevailed by containing efforts to forge a stronger SADC position on Zimbabwe. The Summit communique calls for the immediate release of election results, but fails to address the widespread deceit, intimidation, and violence following the March 29 national elections in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwean opposition party members, however, were pleased with the Summit, which they described as "an improvement" over Mbeki's mediation efforts. Although the communique was weak, and lends truth to criticism about South Africa's dominance within SADC, it marks a step forward in calling attention to problems in Zimbabwe and points to Mugabe's growing isolation within the region. End Summary.

[2](#). (SBU) On April 12, SADC convened a Heads of State Summit to discuss the deadlock following Zimbabwe's national elections on March 29. The meeting began with strong opening remarks from Zambian President (and SADC Chair) Mwanawasa (Ref B), who said that he had called the Summit because of the failure of Zimbabwean officials to publish the results of the March 29 presidential election. He recommended a solution that "reflects the will of the Zimbabwean people." He appealed to Zimbabwean leaders to put national interests above all other interests, to "embrace humility," and to turn over a new leaf in history "in order to make Zimbabwe, the SADC region, and Africa proud."

[3](#). (C) If Mwanawasa took umbrage from Mugabe's refusal to speak with him in the days preceding the summit (Ref C), he was careful to hide his annoyance. Perhaps with a tinge of irony, however, Mwanawasa said that "it is unfortunate that owing to circumstances beyond his control, (Mugabe) is unable to be with us. But he has sent three representatives and I hope they will be able to enrich our deliberations." Mwanawasa did not excuse Mugabe for his absence, noting that Mugabe is "expected to share his perspectives on the matter."

[4](#). (C) Following the opening of the Summit, the SADC leaders withdrew to a closed session that was scheduled to last two hours. Unable to reach agreement, the Heads of State deliberated for over twelve hours, concluding at 5:00 A.M. Mugabe's representatives refused to interact with the Zimbabwean opposition members, who were also present by SADC invitation. Zimbabwean journalists told Emboff that Mbeki and Mwanawasa had "locked horns" throughout the meetings.

The journalists also said that, according to their sources in the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), Mbeki had blocked Mwanawasa's efforts to achieve greater results. They also conveyed considerable disagreement over how to describe the situation in Zimbabwe, with Mwanawasa's camp preferring to call it a "crisis," and an Mbeki-led faction insisting that it be referred to as an "impasse." Additionally, the Zimbabwean journalist had heard from their MDC sources that Mwanawasa had chided the Zimbabwe delegation "for several hours" over offensive statements about him in the Zimbabwean state press.

15. (U) The communique (see Ref A for the full text) stated that Zimbabwe opposition candidates confirmed that the elections were held in a free, fair, and peaceful environment. It urged election authorities to verify and tabulate results in the presence of candidates and/or their agents and to expeditiously release the results. It encouraged all parties to accept the results, when announced. If run-offs become necessary, the communique urged the Government of Zimbabwe to ensure a "secure environment."

16. (C) It appears that Mbeki prevailed in containing efforts to call for stronger SADC action. The communique failed to capture the vision outlined by Mwanawasa during his opening remarks. In seeking consensus, it appears as though the SADC leaders complied with the lowest common denominator. The communique makes no reference to the widespread deceit, intimidation, and violence following the March 29 polls in Zimbabwe. Nor does it single out Mugabe for his presumed role in blocking the release of the election results. Although the communique calls for the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission to comply with the SADC Principles and Guidelines governing democratic elections, it fails to note that these protocols have already been breached.

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17. (U) Following the release of the communique, Zambian Foreign Minister Kabinge Pande together with MDC Secretary General Tendai Biti fielded questions from the press. In his public statements, Pande said the situation in Zimbabwe "is not a crisis at all," echoing Mbeki's statement in Harare after his meeting with Mugabe on April 12 en route to the Summit. He said Zimbabwe opposition leader Tsvangirai should be pleased with the outcome "because we've taken care of all his concerns."

18. (C) Perhaps gratified by the show of support from some SADC Presidents, MDC leadership, who participated in the meetings to some extent, expressed satisfaction with the results. Biti called the Summit "a major improvement" over Mbeki's attempts at mediation. Biti went further to say that the communique "exposes the limitations of quiet diplomacy in comparison to the constructive engagement, which other countries pursued against the apartheid regime in South Africa." He praised the SADC leaders for their courage in holding an emergency summit, which he said was "an acknowledgement that things were not right in Zimbabwe."

19. (C) Comment. In many respects, it was SADC, not Mugabe, that was on trial as the world watched to see whether SADC is capable of acting with impartiality and authority. To some, SADC's half-hearted, mealymouthed resolution was a disappointment, and lends truth to criticism that South Africa continues to wield too much influence within SADC. According to the MDC, however, "SADC has acquitted itself fairly well." Biti interpreted the communique "within the context of African diplomacy" to mean that Mugabe had delayed the results, abused the law, and perpetrated violence. Indeed, implicit in the communique--and explicit in many parts of Mwanawasa's speech--is the acknowledgement that the electoral process in Zimbabwe has gone awry. Mwanawasa (and other like-minded Presidents) is to be praised for his leadership on the issue, and willingness to arbitrate (and confront Mbeki) throughout the night, despite his failing

health. Notwithstanding the weakness of the communique, the Summit marks a step forward in SADC's willingness to call attention to Zimbabwe and it points to Mugabe's growing isolation within the region.

MARTINEZ